

What must we do in, for and to the world after Vietnam?

Strategy for Tomorrow

By Hanson W. Baldwin.

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By JAMES CHACE

The trouble with "conventional wisdom" is that almost everyone pays homage to it but virtually no one follows it. In foreign policy the main tenet of the new conventional wisdom is that America should not be the "world's policeman." But 25 years after World War II, Americans are still at it, acting as "watchmen on the walls of world freedom," as John F. Kennedy put it in an address scheduled to be delivered in Dallas, on Nov. 22, 1963. Take, for example, Hanson W. Baldwin, the former New York Times military editor, in his new book, "Strategy for Tomorrow." After disclaiming any need for us to impose a Pax Americana upon the world, he then takes up the balance sheet of our commitments versus our resources; the former list is staggering.

His book is the story, as he puts it, of a "colossus under strain." And he is rigorous in his view that the judgment of military men is what is needed if an intelligent and comprehensive strategy is to be devised in our containment of "expansionist Communism." Though Baldwin does not question the traditional American concept of civilian control of the military, the message comes through clearly that war is something too serious not to be entrusted to generals.

There is something to be said for this view in the light of the postwar history of United States military involvement. It was, after all, a general who avoided any significant new commitment of American troops abroad during his tenure as Commander in Chief. Eisenhower wrote in his memoirs that when he was urged by the French to use U.S. troops in Indochina in 1954, he decided never to commit forces to the defense of Indochina unless there was evidence of "overt Chinese aggression," which, in any case he "did not believe was likely."

In an atmosphere where the generals are too often considered the bogeymen of world order, we would do well to heed Hanson Baldwin's explication of an effective strategy for the post-Vietnam world; he is a man who both understands and sympathizes with the professional military man's requirements in coping with "the nature of man . . . that causes war." Referring to the command-post atmosphere at the White House under President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara, he is harsh in his criticism of the "over-

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control of military forces and the dictation of tactical and technical procedures by men thousands of miles from the battlefield," which "contributed to the end they were intended to prevent: increased bloodshed."

In Baldwin's judgment, the most pragmatic strategy for the United States to follow "in the struggle for the world" is an oceanic or mari-

a variety of situations, or an effective air capability. But the thrust of his argument is toward the blue-water strategy. Britain in the 19th century appears as a model for the United States because of her understanding that "relative global stability" and the protection of her worldwide interests were maintained chiefly through "an understanding of what

late President Kennedy in the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis and Vietnam, times "when bold but wise action could have changed the course of history." (The alternatives to his caution are not, however, put forth.)

Our vital interests remain formidable. There is North America, including the Caribbean area; Latin America, where "we cannot tolerate its monopolistic utilization, its political domination or military conquest by any unfriendly power"; preservation of a "free and independent Japan"; an independent South Korea and "the freedom and security of the offshore islands and land masses fringing Asia from the Aleutians to Australia and New Zealand"; the Middle East; Europe, of course; the vital sea lanes around the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Malacca. All this, as Baldwin puts it, "we must defend."

There remains the inherent contradiction between what Baldwin declares must be defended and his perception that a "new internationalism" is necessary in order to cut back on the expenditure of our manpower and national treasure. Rather than describe what can be probably eliminated from our global commitments, Baldwin constantly invokes the vocabulary of the cold war to justify the whole panoply of a United States-maintained world gendarmerie. Are we really in a "struggle for the world" with an aggressive, expanding Communism? Is the United States faced with the need to bolster governments under attack to secure them "against creeping Communism?" Is this the language we should be using to ask the questions we should be asking?

Americans today are a people weary of foreign entanglements who wish to devote their energies to domestic reform. Though a maritime strategy under these changed circumstances may well be the most effective defense we can mount, how can such a strategy be wisely implemented unless a reasoned reappraisal is made of what is in the seventies America's national interest? The discovery of new answers to this overriding question will ultimately dictate our military posture.

Baldwin, however, continues to define our vital interests in the categories of the postwar period when, as Richard Nixon himself has pointed out, we are moving from the era of confrontation to one of negotiation. Without a redefinition of our national interest and our concomitant military role, we risk becoming what the British Foreign Minister Palmerston warned England against becoming a century ago — that is to say, "the Quixote of the world."

time strategy. By building up our naval strength, we would be best able to deploy our nuclear weapons as well as to intervene "early on." Such a maritime strategy would presumably permit us the luxury of choosing the time and place of our interventions and so "take as much or as little of any war as we wish." This is not to say that Baldwin would ignore research and development, a well-trained army able to cope with

Alfred Mahan called 'the influence of sea power upon history.'

For, in Baldwin's view, our interests are indeed global. He recognizes the need to cut back on our ground forces both in Asia and in Europe and explains how American ground strength in Germany could be reduced gradually to about one-fourth or one-third of its present level. But at the same time he warns that one must not be "too cautious" as was the

Drawings by Seymour Chwast.



